

E. Honduras

Honduras was the most heavily impacted Hurricane Mitch country. At least 7,000 people were killed, with as many as 11,000 missing and presumed to be dead. Property damages totaled about \$4 billion. Around 1.5 million people were made homeless. Entire villages were washed away and the country's infrastructure was devastated as roads and bridges were destroyed. At least 70 percent of all crops were destroyed, including 80 percent of the banana crop. Crop losses are valued at \$900 million.

FEMA contributed to the USAID mission's Intermediate Result #1, "Strengthened local, national, and regional capacity in natural disaster mitigation and preparedness and for effective response to natural disasters in such areas as vulnerability assessments, risk management, emergency operations, and community preparedness."

1. National Emergency Management System

FEMA proceeded with the project by bringing a team of experts in the beginning of the project to conduct an initial needs assessment. From the needs assessment, information on the country's emergency management system was collected, and potential activities were identified. FEMA's goal was to assist Honduras in strengthening its emergency management system at the national level by working with the country's national emergency management agency, COPECO (La Comision Permanente de Contingencias). Following the needs assessment, representatives from COPECO and local NGOs were invited to FEMA to participate in a FEMA sponsored one-week summit on emergency management in June 2000. The Summit provided an overview of principles and practices of emergency management and afforded the opportunity to visit a nearby state emergency operations center and a model disaster resistant community – Project Impact. The institutional issues that were considered were the national response plan, national emergency management laws and regulations and the national emergency operations center. FEMA wanted to work with COPECO to review the existing national response plan, and emergency management laws and regulations, emergency operations center (EOC), and to find ways to improve them in order to give COPECO greater leverage when responding to a national emergency.

Due to the change in leaderships and in priorities in COPECO over the course of FEMA's technical assistance, FEMA had to adjust its technical assistance accordingly. At the start, FEMA's legal consultant provided significant legislative assistance in revising the current emergency management law. FEMA participated in numerous workshops and working meetings to develop a revised law. However, with the new leadership in place, the initiative was halted due to other priorities. The initiative was not revamped while FEMA

was still working in the country in 2001. Many organizations such as FEMA, UNDP, COPECO, and others have contributed a lot of time and effort into the revision of the law. It would be in COPECO's best interest to finalize the law and submit it to the National Assembly for consideration as soon as possible.

In addition to the law, FEMA also assisted COPECO in reviewing and commenting on the national response plan. The plan too needs to be finalized, and shared with other participating ministries to secure their concurrence, if that has not yet occurred.

FEMA also assessed the existing EOC and provided a set of short-term and long-term recommendations and design plan for the national EOC. COPECO subsequently located a new site for the construction of a new national EOC. FEMA assisted COPECO by reviewing and providing thorough comments on two sets of new design plan. The construction of the new facility should be underway by now.

Lastly, FEMA supported COPECO in the development and evaluation of a national simulation/exercise in La Lima in May 2001. FEMA assessed and provided summary recommendations on the framework of an inclusive exercise plan, as well as recommendations on the training component of the exercise. During the actual event, FEMA observed and evaluated one of the regional EOC and provided comments to the lead simulation evaluator. This event was sponsored and supported by the USAID and U.S. Southern Command.

While working on the Hurricane Mitch Reconstruction efforts, FEMA coordinated its activities and shared information with the USGS, NOAA, Peace Corps, USDA, HUD, U.S. Southern Command, EU, JICA, PAHO, SICA, USAID/OFDA, World Bank, IDB, UNDP, CEPREDENAC, CHF, and Partners of America on a routine basis.

2. Building Disaster Resistant Communities

FEMA chose Cooperative Housing Foundation (CHF) as the in-country NGO to implement the Project Impact initiative in Honduras because FEMA wanted an organization that has local language and cultural expertise, was already in country with the staffing surge capacity, basic understanding of emergency management, skills in training and capacity building and knowledge of the local environment, community and politics. CHF had excellent relationship with FEMA and the pilot Project Impact communities. CHF worked closely with FEMA's Project Impact consultant and kept FEMA informed on a quarterly basis through written reports, the FEMA consultant and telephone discussions.

All three of the Project Impact communities suffered extensive losses from the hurricane, yet each community has the resolve to improve and ensure that future losses are minimized. The following is a listing of Project Impact projects by community:

La Lima

Developed a Mitigation Committee –which meets periodically.
Built flood gate and control valves –this project protects part of Chiquita’s banana plantation and three neighborhoods, with a population of 2,000.
Improved the Health Center electric system –this project benefits 25,000 people.
Reforested along dikes –this project protects dikes, which were built through other programs. This project benefits all of La Lima.
Elevated storage units at four locations –this project provides storage of medical supplies and relief supplies in flood-vulnerable areas. These projects benefit 960 people.
Implemented a trash removal program students weekly clean trash from canals and streams that otherwise flood because of the accumulation of trash. This project benefits 4,500 people.
Added a transformer for a water pump –this project benefits 1,167 people.
Implemented an education project –Over 6,000 trash elimination stickers have been handed out to educate citizens on the importance of proper trash disposal; Fifth grade students have been taught about soil conservation; sixth grade students have been taught about the relationship between flooding and the accumulation of trash in canals and streams.

Pespire

Developed a Mitigation Committee –which meets periodically.
Reforested along dikes –this project protects the dikes and benefits the entire community.
Built flood walls in Esquimay and Las Marias –walls will minimize flood losses. These projects benefit 1,060 people.
Improved the ramp on the bridges over the Nacaome and La Montaña Rivers –these projects will assure that future floods will likely not impact the bridges. The bridges are critical evacuation routes for thousands of people. These projects benefit 3,447 people.
Dredged the Nacaome River –this project minimizes future flood losses and benefits 3,200 people.
Repaired box bridges at Corinto and Cantón Suyapa –these repairs assure that the bridges are less likely to suffer losses following flood events. These projects benefit 1,873 people.
Relocated one house –this project benefits one family.
Provided drainage access –this project benefits 77 people.

Implemented an education project.

Santa Rita

Created a Mitigation Committee –which meets periodically.

Reforested an area –which will prevent soil erosion, landslides, mudslides and flooding. This project benefits all of Santa Rita.

Built a drainage project –this project benefits 864 people.

Built a retention wall –which will protect the neighborhood from future flooding. This project benefits 303 people.

Build hammock bridges at Los Angeles and 4 de Septiembre – these projects will benefit 2,794 people.

Build a box bridge –this project benefits 237 people.

Implemented an education project.